

# Who's looking at Who?

Andrew Duncan meets TV's odd couple Peter Capaldi & Jenna Coleman – and finds they share a deep love

**T**HEY'RE AN INCONGRUOUS couple, perhaps one of the most unlikely pairings on television: he's 6ft; she's 5ft 2 and sometimes has to stand on an apple box when they're filming together. He's 57, cadaverous, an Oscar winner and a bit battered by life; she's 29, fresh-faced, cherubic. He was the foul-mouthed enforcer Malcolm Tucker in *The Thick of It* (2005–12) and lead singer in a punk band the B\*\*\*\*s from Hell; she was a demure acquaintance of Prince Harry last summer (they had tea at a polo match), and was in *Emmerdale* for four years.

This week, the 12th Time Lord, Peter Capaldi, and his companion Clara Oswald, played by Jenna Coleman, begin the ninth series of *Doctor Who* since its 2005 revival.

Their relationship is at the heart of the show and, he explains, "It has no equivalent in TV or fiction, a friendship between an alien creature and an extremely bright, clever and brave young woman. It's unusual for a man of my age to be friendly with such a youthful lady. She wants to go out into the universe and enjoy herself, happy to be reckless and in danger. I was so lucky it was Jenna because it might not have worked with anyone else. It's tricky to come into a long-established show, especially as the lead, and Jenna has proved to be a wonderful actress and friend."

She recalls they had lunch together after the hype and secrecy surrounding his role. "I'd no idea who would take over from Matt Smith, and when I was told it was Peter, it was one of those 'aha, that makes sense – >

'I'm the same person I was when I wasn't a sex symbol'

PETER CAPALDI

'Age made no difference – he's an alien'

JENNA COLEMAN

PETER CAPALDI AND JENNA COLEMAN  
EXCLUSIVELY PHOTOGRAPHED  
FOR RADIO TIMES BY  
RICHARD GRASSIE



< genius' kind of moments. But the first thing he said to me was, 'There will be no romance in the Tardis.'

He smiles. They spark off each other in an easy way. He's self-effacing and seems curiously vulnerable; she's lively and confident. "I was keen there shouldn't be a romantic element," he says. "It would have been completely creepy. It's fine if you have handsome young men like Matt and David Tennant, but as a father [he's been married to actress and TV producer Elaine Collins since 1991 and they have a teenage daughter, Cecily], I felt it would be inappropriate. And it's forged a huge bond between us. There's no romance, but there's deep love."

**S**HE KNEW SMITH was leaving when she joined the cast three years ago. "I was really excited to start a new relationship with Peter although it was scary. The Doctor, who is my best friend, is not only in a different body, but he's also getting to know himself. Age made no difference. He's an alien. We're not lovey-dovey. Everything is more about what is unsaid, rather than said. Clara may seem like a control freak, but she's trying to control the uncontrollable."

"It's a difficult show to act," he says. "It goes from B-movie sci-fi to Freudian drama and tragedy. There's romance, pantomime, humour and sadness, so you're kept on your toes. I try not to be too romantic or sentimental. Sometimes Jenna will run down a corridor shouting, 'Doctor, there's a monster,' and stuff. Part of the

## 'There's no romance but there is deep love'

PETER CAPALDI

tradition is that sets wobble and you have to fight a giant spider made of rubber. I enjoy that. It's not so well budgeted as viewers might think [each episode takes 12 days to produce] but it looks great because of the talent of the people working on it."

Earlier this year they did a worldwide promotional tour. "We spend nine months filming in Cardiff [at Roath Lock, BBC Wales's 170,000ft<sup>2</sup> facility], talking to aliens, in our own little world," she says, "and then go somewhere like South Korea and we're greeted with such enthusiasm at the airport. It's a surprise to see how far-reaching the show is."

"I'm amazed at the audience reaction and don't really know why it is," he says. "It has monsters, which people like, and there are hardly any other shows with them. It's an established part of family-oriented TV here. I've been a fan since childhood and have a personal relationship with this mysterious alien and his companion rambling through time and space confronted by monsters yet holding at its heart a sort of melancholy that is never quite addressed. Unlike other sci-fi, *Doctor Who* has a domestic element



**MASTERFUL**  
Missy (Michelle Gomez) is back, meddling in the lives of the Doctor and Clara

– the Tardis could turn up in the Mall or a coffee shop – but it catches fire abroad, in culturally different places, particularly with students and young adults. I suppose it offers escapism."

They've both had interesting careers. He was brought up in Glasgow where his parents, of Italian extraction, were in the ice-cream business. At school he was mocked and called "Moon Man", which still seems to rankle. "It was the Apollo landings and I spent my entire life writing letters to Nasa who sent pictures to me. I was a geek before the word was invented." He wrote to *Radio Times* aged 15, in 1974, praising the magazine for its coverage of *Doctor Who* before he developed less cerebral interests two years later and became lead singer in a punk band, the Dreamboys, originally the B\*\*\*\*\*s from Hell.

"I was at arts school. Everyone picked up guitars and we had a lot of fun playing gigs." Craig Ferguson, now a leading US talk show host, was their drummer. He introduced Capaldi earlier this year as the only guest "I've taken acid with". Capaldi smiles sheepishly. "Craig is one of the funniest people I've ever met, a natural comedian." She veers the conversation onto a safer topic. "You're in a museum in Paisley. I have pictures of you, with the band."

He looks at once mortified, surprised and pleased. He's also become a sex symbol. "Unbelievable," he says. "When you're famous, people say things about you. I'm the same person I was when I wasn't a sex symbol. Fame is such a privilege and any downside is a small price to pay. It's slightly different, though, because people think they're meeting Doctor Who, an icon, and not me."

"I get that directed at me, too," she says. "It's recognition associated with a show that people like, which is nice."

He failed his first interview for drama school. "I was dreadful, but then I got lucky. I knew

nothing about acting – my family went to pantomime at Christmas, and that was it – but I thought it would be good fun because I liked watching telly. I came to London at 17 and the whole thing was terrifying. I moved into a world that was utterly different." At 25 he returned to his flat "a wee bit drunk", where his landlady, a costume designer, was talking to film director Bill Forsyth, who cast him as an amiable geek in the highly successful *Local Hero*.

**A** FEW YEARS LATER Capaldi directed a comic film for BBC Scotland, *Franz Kafka's It's a Wonderful Life*, which won a Bafta and an Oscar for best live action short film in 1995. "I only did it to explore my creativity, then everyone said, 'Are you going to be a film director?' which I didn't want to be. I have an arts school background, so my ethos is: you have a go at everything and if you keep your eyes open and are lucky, you learn. Sometimes you're good, sometimes not. I shiver when I recall how arrogantly I behaved, but I was probably just stupid. When you're young, you are stupid – apart from you, Jenna."

"Thank you," she smiles.

After success, failure – a few weeks after winning his Oscar he was back directing a dog-food commercial in a Rickmansworth field. "All actors go through ups and downs and walk in the deep shadow of failure. I like to talk about it, unlike most who think it somehow means you're not successful. My failures taught me more than any success and made me wise. There are profound things I won't go into. Working with others, I learnt to rely on myself. There are a lot of high priests, Aztecs, in this business, who profess to have the answers. When you realise they don't, it's a remarkable feeling." He was on the verge of packing up acting and selling the family home in north London after being out >



of work for a year before *The Thick of It* came along in 2005.

He used to draw every day, but has no time with the *Doctor Who* schedule. "I miss it because I know it's atrophying. It's not something I do as a pastime. It's part of me. I'd like to have been an artist but think I'm too gregarious – well, not really – and when I look at painters like John Byrne [who also wrote the 1987 BBC series *Tutti Frutti* starring Robbie Coltrane], I think there's no point in having a go."

**C**OLEMAN WAS BROUGHT up in Blackpool, where her father and brother run a shop-fitting business. She was a bridesmaid in *Summer Holiday* with Darren Day at 11, and turned down a place to study English at York University when offered a part in *Emmerdale* as Jasmine Thomas at 19. She found her character boring and decided to leave – just before Jasmine had a lesbian affair with her best pal Debbie, became pregnant by Debbie's father, had an abortion, and clubbed her policeman boyfriend to death with a chair leg, as happens in soaps. "A good exit story," she says wryly. She went to LA at 22.

"I'd lived in Leeds for four years, didn't have a gap year. I wanted a change, to flex different muscles. It was really brave. I arrived at the airport having never driven on the other side of the road, and had my car towed [for a parking

**'I'd like to have been an artist but I'm too gregarious'**

PETER CAPALDI

violation] on the first day. I enjoyed auditions – they keep you active, creative and busy while you're unemployed. I returned after four months feeling great and fearless."

Capaldi has no idea how long he'll play the part. "It depends whether viewers like me, and you never know. We're conscious of the fact the show will go on without any of us. Life is full of surprises, and there is a cosmic sledgehammer."

"You never feel you've arrived," she adds, "which is a good thing. It would be quite scary to feel safe. You're in *Doctor Who* knowing it will never last. It's constantly regenerating, so you want to make your time count and enjoy the adventure for the fleeting time you're here."

Controversy is always close, though. In Capaldi's first episode, last year, there was a shared on-screen kiss between lizard woman Madame Vastra and her human wife Jenny Flint even though they'd been together three years. There were complaints that the BBC was promoting a gay agenda. They both laugh. "I think it was good," he says, and then looks mock serious. "Actually it's not just lesbian. It's across species, which is even worse, presumably. It's crazy if people get up in arms about it. There should be lots more kissing in *Doctor Who*. So long as it's not the Doctor and Clara."



# Steven Moffat's episode guide

What dangers lie ahead for the Doctor and Clara? The creative chief gives us the lowdown

## 1 THE MAGICIAN'S APPRENTICE WRITTEN BY STEVEN MOFFAT DIRECTED BY HETTIE MACDONALD

"What's a confession dial?"

"In your terms, a will. This is the last will and testament of the Time Lord known as the Doctor."

A final message from a dying scientist. A plea from the deadliest corner of time and space. Only one man can answer, but he has gone missing from all of time and space. Where is the Doctor? Friends and enemies alike can find him nowhere. As the skies of planet Earth stand frozen, Clara Oswald enters into a dangerous alliance.

When even the Daleks can't track down their ancient foe, and the Doctor's old friend and nemesis, Missy, is forced to ask for help, does it mean that the mad man in the box has truly disappeared? What fear, or what terrible shame, could possibly drive the Doctor into the shadows? The answers are more dreadful than Clara's worst imaginings, and she finds herself embarking on a journey into the Doctor's worst nightmare...

## 2 THE WITCH'S FAMILIAR WRITTEN BY STEVEN MOFFAT DIRECTED BY HETTIE MACDONALD

"The Doctor is trapped. He's a prisoner of the creatures who hate him most in the universe. Between us and him is everything the greatest warrior race in history can throw at us. We, on the other hand, have a pointy stick."

There are places the Doctor should never go. Planets where his life would not be worth an hour's purchase. When he finds himself in the very worst of these, without his Tardis, or his sonic, and with his best friends murdered in front of his eyes, he has only his wits to keep him alive. And perhaps something else. What is the Doctor's confession? Why did he really leave Gallifrey all those centuries ago? And is it a secret he is willing to give up?

## 3 UNDER THE LAKE WRITTEN BY TOBY WHITHOUSE DIRECTED BY DANIEL O'HARA

"It's impossible! It's evil! I hate it! It's astonishing! I want to KISS IT TO DEATH."

Under a lake, in the dripping gloom of an underwater base, stands a gleaming black spaceship, recovered from the lake bed. Nothing is inside – but when the base crew start dying, they make a terrible discovery: ghosts are real! And their friends are refusing to stay dead! The Doctor and Clara arrive to find a base under siege from beyond the grave. But how can the dead be walking? What has brought them back? When the Doctor discovers the truth, it's more terrifying than any simple ghost story.



**GREEN DEATH**  
This dragon-like creature appears in *The Girl Who Died*

## 4 BEFORE THE FLOOD WRITTEN BY TOBY WHITHOUSE DIRECTED BY DANIEL O'HARA

"Doctor. Hello. Can I just say: huge fan."

In the eerie remains of a town that never was, something is stalking the Doctor and his friends. A desperate battle for survival is under way, but this time our heroes already know which of them is going to lose. With the past and future hanging in the balance, the Doctor is breaking the rules to win the day. Can anything stop the Fisher King? And, more importantly, who composed Beethoven's Fifth?

## 5 THE GIRL WHO DIED WRITTEN BY JAMIE MATHIESON & STEVEN MOFFAT DIRECTED BY ED BAZALGETTE

"There's going to be a war tomorrow. And here's some news, this just in – we are going to win the hell out of it!"

In a backwater of history, in a little Viking village where all the warriors have just been slaughtered, a young girl called Ashildr is about to make a

desperate mistake. The Mire are the deadliest mercenaries in the galaxy, famed for being unstoppable and without mercy – and Ashildr has just declared war on them. The Doctor and Clara have 12 hours to turn a handful of farmers and blacksmiths into a fighting force ready to face down Odin himself. And there's more – because this is the day when the Doctor remembers where he's seen his own face before.

## 6 THE WOMAN WHO LIVED WRITTEN BY CATHERINE TREGENNA DIRECTED BY ED BAZALGETTE

"Ninja, nun, surgeon, scientist, composer, inventor... it's a fantastic CV."

England, 1651. The highwayman known as the Nightmare is plaguing the land. But the Nightmare is not all he seems, and his fire-breathing accomplice who lurks in the shadows is clearly more than human... The Doctor, on the trail of an alien artefact, is brought face to face with the consequences of his own actions. For once he encounters someone who won't let him turn his back on the things he has done. But will the Nightmare be his friend or foe? It may well take till the end of the universe to be sure...

## 7 THE ZYON INVASION WRITTEN BY PETER HARNES DIRECTED BY DANIEL NETTHEIM

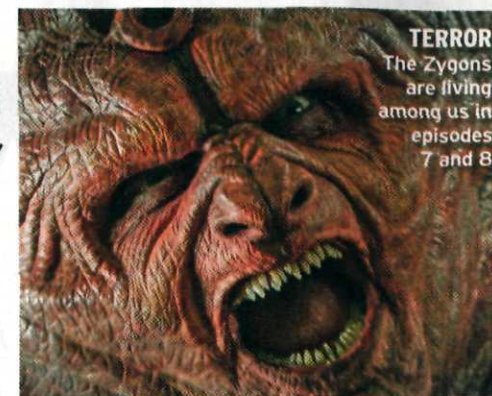
"Operation Double is a covert operation, outside of normal Unit strictures, to resettle and rehearse an alien race, in secrecy, on planet Earth."

A long time ago, the Doctor made a deal in the Tower of London. Twenty million Zygons walk among us, in human form, living undetected in peace and harmony. But cracks are showing in this delicate peace. Humans and Zygons are disappearing. In city apartment blocks, lifts are going missing, and far below the streets of Britain, alien pods are growing in secret caverns. Unit's scientific advisor, Osgood, sends a desperate message to the Doctor – but since Osgood is long dead, how is that even possible?

## 8 THE ZYON INVERSION WRITTEN BY PETER HARNES & STEVEN MOFFAT DIRECTED BY DANIEL NETTHEIM

"Humans cannot accept us the way we really are. If we cannot hide, we must fight. You're going to be the first. You're going to be the first to make the humans see."

The future of planet Earth is sealed in a box in Unit's back archive, and only the Doctor knows what's inside. With Unit under Zygon control, and Clara lost,



**TERROR**  
The Zygons are living among us in episodes 7 and 8

the Doctor and Osgood find themselves fugitives in a London where no one can be trusted – but the wily old Time Lord knows there is one last hope for peace. Because that box in the black archive isn't any old box. It's an Osgood Box!

## 9 SLEEP NO MORE WRITTEN BY MARK GATISS DIRECTED BY JUSTIN MOLOTNIKOV

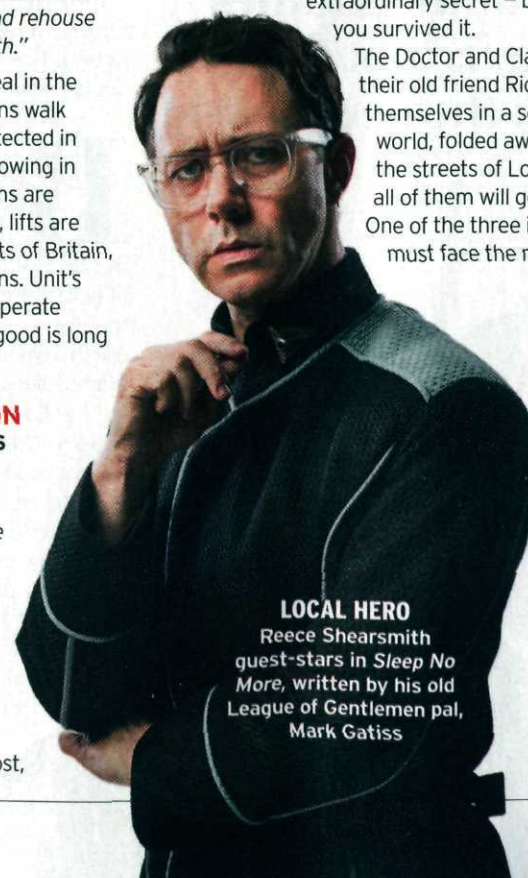
This is footage collected from a space rescue mission. If you value your life, your sanity and the future of your species, DO NOT WATCH IT.

## 10 FACE THE RAVEN WRITTEN BY SARAH DOLLARD DIRECTED BY JUSTIN MOLOTNIKOV

"There have always been rumours. Stories passed from traveller to traveller, mutterings about hidden streets, secret pockets of alien life right here on Earth."

Have you ever found yourself in a street you've never seen before? The next day, could you not find that street again? You weren't dreaming. Your memory isn't playing tricks. Like many lost souls throughout the ages, you have stumbled on an extraordinary secret – be grateful you survived it.

The Doctor and Clara, with their old friend Rigby, find themselves in a secret alien world, folded away among the streets of London. Not all of them will get out alive. One of the three intruders must face the raven...



**LOCAL HERO**  
Reece Shearsmith guest-stars in *Sleep No More*, written by his old *League of Gentlemen* pal, Mark Gatiss

## 11 HEAVEN SENT WRITTEN BY STEVEN MOFFAT DIRECTED BY RACHEL TALALAY

"When, at last, you rise to go, there will be another shadow next to yours. And your life will then be over."

In a world unlike any other he has seen, the Doctor faces the greatest challenge of his many lives. And he must face it alone.



**FEARSOME**  
A hit in the last series, Joivan Wade returns as Rigby in *Face the Raven*

## 12 HELL BENT WRITTEN BY STEVEN MOFFAT DIRECTED BY RACHEL TALALAY

"Is it a sad song?"  
"Nothing's sad till it's over. Then everything is."  
"What's it called?"  
"I think it's called Clara."  
"Tell me about her."

If you took everything from him, and betrayed him, and trapped him, and broke both his hearts... how far might the Doctor go? It is time, at last, for the Doctor's confession.

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**MEET THE DOCTOR**

The Time Lord himself, Peter Capaldi, is joined by creative chief Steven Moffat and executive producer Brian Minchin. For tickets, go to [radiotimesfestival.com](http://radiotimesfestival.com)

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